

## **TORONTO'S NEO-NAZIS:**

# ***The Boys in the Hoods***

**T**he growth of the far right in Toronto is not an new phenomenon. The Heritage Front is not the first Toronto-based fascist group but the most recent example of a movement which dates back to the 1930s: when the Canadian Nazi Party ran candidates in Toronto; when the Balmy Beach Club in the east end was renamed the Swastika Club; when nazi thugs attacked Jewish youth at Christie Pits Park, youth who defended themselves and their community by physically trouncing the nazi mob. Even the nazis of the 1930s cannot be isolated from the history of racism in Canada - from the genocidal policies used against the First Nations to the history of violent racism directed against the African and Asian communities.

This ongoing legacy of racism provides the fertile grounds for the growth of groups like the Heritage Front and Church of the Creator today. It's the historical context of racism which makes some white people vulnerable to recruitment by these hateful organizations, and the strong links between groups in Canada, the U.S., Europe and South Africa make the white supremacist movement dangerous to us all.

It is often tempting to ignore neo-nazi organizing and violence. It is sometimes easier to see them as misfits or isolated extremists rather than face the larger problems of widespread racism, homophobia and anti-Semitism in society. But the first step to confronting hate violence is understanding how racism and prejudice has played a crucial role in the history of Canada, and how the struggles against it - from the time of Columbus to today - must inform and shape both our anti-racist analysis and activism.

### **WHO ARE THE PEOPLE IN OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD?**

Many of us here in Ontario see neo-nazi, Ku Klux Klan and other far right organizing as something that happens in Alberta, Saskatchewan or Quebec - yet southwestern Ontario is the most active area of organized white supremacy in Canada. Our region is perhaps the organizational centre for the Canadian far right.

The leadership of the local neo-nazi movement is very experienced, many of them having worked with Toronto racist organizations since the 1970s and 1980s. Some have travelled internationally to meet and work with their European and U.S. counterparts. Many have done prison time for "the cause".

**Get informed!**

## **ANTI-RACIST ACTION**

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**Gary Schipper (L)**  
**Wolfgang Droege (R)**

The main public figure in Toronto is Wolfgang Droege. Droege has been active in the Canadian far right since the 1970s when he worked in both the Toronto based Western Guard and later with the Canadian Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, where he rose to become the number two man in the national organization. Droege is a friend and "racial comrade" of both David Duke, the former KKK leader turned racist politician and U.S. Presidential candidate, and Tom Metzger, leader of the violent California-based White Aryan Resistance (WAR).

The Heritage Front was founded in 1988 when Droege and other white supremacists left the racist Nationalist Party of Canada. The Front bases itself on the National Association for the Advancement of White People, the organization formed by David Duke after leaving the Klan. The NAAWP presented itself not as a white supremacist organization but as a "white separatist" group concerned with "equal rights for whites".

"Equal rights for whites" has become a popular slogan used by the right to justify attacks on the traditional targets of white supremacy. Under this banner, groups such as the Heritage Front denounce women's rights, non-white immigration, lesbian & gay rights, Native land rights and educational curriculum which stresses anti-racism or tells the history of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust - all of which in their minds adds up to a conspiracy to destroy the white race. Like the NAAWP, the Front hides the blatantly racist and anti-Semitic rhetoric of the past behind rants against immigration laws, crime, lesbian & gay rights, affirmative action, perceived attacks on (their) free speech, anti-racists, etc. in hopes of appealing to existing prejudices in white Canadian society.

The Heritage Front runs a telephone hotline which is used to broadcast verbal attacks against the communities which don't fit into their world vision - communities which in reality represent just about all of us. They also publish a monthly magazine called Upfront which carries articles by both Front members and fascist organizations in the U.S. and Europe. (It even boasts a regular column by David Duke!) The Front holds several secret rallies a year often featuring prominent KKK and neo-nazi leaders and Holocaust deniers from the U.S. and Europe. (The meetings are not advertised for fear of a massive anti-racist response, such as that organized by ARA in November 1992 which shut down a HF gathering!)

Despite their claims of merely seeking "free speech" and "open debate", the Heritage Front has time and time again revealed its true violent nature. In June 1993, three Front members, including Droege and his henchman Pete Mitrevski, were arrested on assault and weapons charges following an attempted assault of anti-racists. The other Front member arrested, Chris Newhook, has already been convicted and is now serving a 12 month sentence. Another Front diehard, Elisse Hategan, is facing charges of distributing hate material targeting the Black community.

Droege himself has already done prison time in the U.S. for his racist activities, including three years for his part in an attempted neo-nazi armed invasion of the island of Dominica, which was intended to establish a base for the international fascist movement.



One of Droege's responsibilities after the invasion was to have been running a cocaine processing plant.

The flip side to the Heritage Front's "soft" image is the Church of the Creator (COTC), perhaps the most violent neo-nazi organization in North America. The COTC has chapters in the U.S., Canada, Europe and South Africa and is known for paramilitary training and using violent attacks as part of its efforts to make the earth a "whites-only" planet.

The "church" part of the organization is based upon the teachings of the millionaire racist and one time Ontario-resident, Ben Klassen (who took the Hitler-thing full circle in August 1993 by committing suicide). Klassen wrote the "White Man's Bible" which serves as the ideological/"spiritual" basis for COTC. It provides a "religious" excuse for their violence and hatred by teaching that white people alone are made in the image of god and that all other races (or "mud races" as they call them) are inferior.

The Toronto COTC is the organization's main representative in Canada and among the most important chapters internationally. COTC people from the Toronto/Hamilton area



George Burdi

have played major roles in the international leadership and the most popular COTC rock band, RaHoWa (short for Racial Holy War), is based here. RaHoWa and other COTC bands are crucial in fundraising for their violent racist activities and in recruiting young people and skinheads as stormtroopers. The concerts pump up the bonehead fans with violent hatred and "siege heils", often resulting in assaults on the public after the shows let out. In June 1993, Heritage Front skinhead Jason Hoolans brutally assaulted a Tamil man after a RaHoWa gig, leaving the man partially paralysed.

Local COTC boss and RaHoWa "singer" George Burdi (aka Rev. Eric Hawthorne) recently helped found a Detroit-based record label called Resistance Records to make and distribute neo-nazi recordings across North America and Europe. The label's first release is a RaHoWa cd entitled "Declaration of War" (as if we didn't get the idea...).

The Toronto COTC also boasts a Security Legion (or "White Berets"), a group of skinheads who train in martial arts and weapons and provide security for many neo-nazi events in the city. Toronto media recently identified Eric Fischer, a former sergeant in the Canadian Airborne Regiment, as the leader and trainer of the Security Legion. Eric, along with his brother and fellow Security Legions member, Elkar (another Airborne veteran), were arrested during the summer of 1993 with a third COTC bonehead for kidnapping a Heritage Front member, assaulting him, and threatening to kill him by injecting him with window cleaner (and to think they treat their own this way.) Another Security Legions member, Richard Manley, was recently sentenced to nine months in prison for illegal possession of weapons and ammunition. (He's another Airborne veteran... coincidence???)

## THE LINKS

The fact that the HF and COTC use different methods does not reflect a split but an attempt to build a broad racist front attracting all manner of potential recruits, from older bigots to younger militants. Not only do Burdi and Droege associate openly, but Burdi is





**PULL 'EM UP NOW  
BEFORE THEY TAKE ROOT**

often a prominent figure at Heritage Front rallies, where he either speaks or performs with his band. In April 1993, Burdi appeared with Droege at an Ottawa press conference announcing the launch of the Heritage Front's Ottawa chapter. It's apparent that Burdi (who was arrested for the May 1993 assault of an Ottawa anti-racist) is effectively the number two man in the HF.

The Heritage Front also acts as a front for the movement. As a public organization, unlike the secretive COTC, the Heritage Front is a contact point for newly initiated racists and fascists who can later be directed towards more violent groups.

The primary recruiting ground for both these organizations is young white people. It is from these ranks that the fascists, as they have done in Europe, hope to draw their stormtroopers.

If we are to learn anything from history, it is that fascism is not a movement to be ignored as irrele-

vant. Recent experiences in Germany, where organized gangs of neo-nazis regularly carry out vicious attacks - including arson and murder - against immigrants and refugees, Jews and anti-racists has demonstrated the violent agenda and goals of their movement. The German government's move to punish the victims of these attacks by tightening immigration and refugee laws(!) rather than go after racist thugs shows the powerful effects of institutionalized racism in western society, and the limits of looking to government and police for solutions to the problem.

Unlike Germany, the Canadian far right has neither the numbers nor power to influence government policy, but neither did the German far right five years ago. If we choose to ignore the growth of neo-nazism in this country - and choose not to challenge the everyday racism, sexism, homophobia, and anti-Semitism which we encounter in our own lives - then we allow the grounds to remain fertile, and racist movements will continue to grow accordingly.

If we choose to act against racism and prejudice - in our schools, in our families, among our friends, and on the streets - then we can begin to pull up the weeds before they spread...



**ANTI-RACIST ACTION**